

**PARTICIPANT TYPE.....PREGNANT, BREASTFEEDING, DELIVERED WOMEN, AND CHILDREN  
HIGH RISK.....No**

**RISK DESCRIPTION:**

**DEFINITION FOR CHILDREN:** Routine ingestion of non-food items including ashes, carpet fiber, cigarettes and cigarette butts, clay, dust, foam rubber, paint chips, soil, starch (laundry and cornstarch)

**DEFINITION FOR WOMEN:** Compulsively ingesting non-food items including ashes, baking soda, burnt matches, carpet fibers, chalk, cigarettes, clay, dust, large quantities of ice and/or freezer frost, paint chips, soil, starch (laundry and cornstarch).

**ASK ABOUT:**

- Family or cultural practices
- Signs of nutrient deficiency
- Common discomforts of pregnancy (morning sickness, nausea, vomiting, heartburn) and her coping strategies
- Prenatal weight gain goal and current weight gain status or pediatric growth chart
- Amount of non-food item consumed and frequency of intake
- Impact of the non-food item on nutrient and calorie intake (e.g, displaces nutrient-dense foods, adds excess calories, interferes with absorption of key nutrients).

**NUTRITION COUNSELING/EDUCATION TOPICS:**

- Reinforce positive eating behaviors.
- Explain that it is normal for young children to put things in their mouths.
- Explain that some pregnant and postpartum women experience cravings for non-food substances.
- Describe any potential dangers to the individual's health. Some non-food items can be dangerous and cause complications including lead poisoning, gastric and intestinal obstruction, dental erosion, acute toxicity, and parasitic infections.
- Identify acceptable behaviors to substitute in place of eating the risky non-food substance.
  - When you feel the urge to eat X, what else could you do instead? Take a short walk? Read to your child? Chew sugarless gum?
  - Instead of chewing ice, try eating frozen fruit, freezing your own fresh fruit like grapes and berries, or eating a Popsicle made from 100% unsweetened juice.

### **NUTRITION COUNSELING/EDUCATION TOPICS (CON'T):**

- Discuss strategies for reducing the amount of calorically dense non-food items consumed.
- Review other strategies for coping with common discomforts of pregnancy.

### **POSSIBLE REFERRALS:**

- If the participant/parent has not previously reported pica to her/child's health care provider, refer to the primary care provider.
- If the participant does not have an ongoing source of health care, refer to primary care providers in the community or the local public health department.